

Grade Level Representatives Notes

Dear ECS Families and Faculty,

We wanted to let you know about a collaborative initiative amongst the school administration and Parent Community of ECS - the Grade Representatives Committee. This committee is comprised of school principals and volunteer representatives from each grade level.

The purpose of the Grade Reps program is to collect trending concerns and feedback from each grade to share with the administration with an eye toward problem solving when needed. We welcome your questions and concerns and look forward to addressing them during these monthly meetings. Feedback / notes will be shared through the room parents and can also be found online: <http://ecspco.org/volunteer/grade-representatives/>.

Notes from Wednesday October 2, 2018

LOWER SCHOOL

- **Kindergarten/First**
 - Nothing to report!
- **Second**
 - Q: Regarding the tree incident at lower school, we heard that the child was hurt, from our kids, was there any outreach/support to the kids? Why was there not more communication about this- (ex. how bad the child was hurt, what actually did happen, follow up with students)?
 - A: We acknowledge the vagueness to protect the student who was hurt in the situation. Teachers immediately responded to the situation and also followed up with the students.
 - Q: Why was there no communication or acknowledgement about the process of lower school vice principal and that he was leaving? Children were attached and it didn't feel really good to have a sudden absence. The other school was publicizing it, so it would have been good to know from ECS instead.
 - A: We realize this was a missed opportunity, especially as we introduced new staff. Thank you for the feedback.
 - Q: Staffing in EL classroom- staffing ratio only has 2nd teacher with the class 3 days a week. Inconsistent, why is there not two dedicated teachers in the classroom? Why is this the case in EL? Has it been addressed and announced?
 - A: We value co-teaching at ECS and still utilize this innovative teaching technique in all of our classrooms including EL whenever appropriate and possible.
 - Is ECS moving away from a 2 teachers in every classroom model?
 - A: ECS values co-teaching and is making the co-instructional model more efficient. We consider student need whenever scheduling our staff and place teachers together to co-teach in order to best meet student need. Sometimes this means that a class is taught by a single teacher because

we believe one teacher is able to meet the needs of all learners. Other times, we recognize that a second teacher is needed in order to meet the needs of all learners. This model allows us the flexibility to move teachers as needed.

- How to address this new model to parents? Our staffing model for expansion changes the model of 2 teachers in every classroom
- 5th grade- 5 core teachers, sp ed teacher, ed assistant, both fluid- thinking about how we can utilize teachers. Gives more flexibility to provide co teaching. It's not going anywhere, it's just going to look different.
- Playground has been a really big hit! What is happening with the bricks? Can they still be purchased?
 - A: Yes, there will be a few more opportunities for the bricks to be purchased and this project will now be headed by the Board. A new opening for the space will be added near the flagpole, and new cement walkways have been specified for completion. We have had some delays because of weather, but cement work and brick work proposals are in hand - we are waiting for the weather to cooperate!
- **3rd grade**
 - Nothing to report!

UPPER SCHOOL

- **Backlot changes** - changes that give chances for play
 - What's different?
 - A: Our backlot received a much needed renovation this year! It was completely re-paved with new asphalt making the playing area smooth and we covered up a drain that was no longer working so water does not pool in the back lot any more. Curbs were also installed to direct water to our new rain garden which is helping to control stormwater overflow. New game lines were painted including: four 4-Square courts, racing lines and basketball lines. The 8th grade is building benches and picnic tables for the backlot as the last piece of their stormwater restoration and a gaga pit will be installed soon!
- **Turtle Park Supervision Update**
 - What's different?
 - A: Turtle Park is to be used by one class at a time, and the wooded area is reserved for instructional purposes only. Students who are using the park for recreation should stay in the grassy area and are no longer permitted beyond the tree line. Staff has received a refresher on free-time/recess supervision.
- **4th grade**
 - Q: Why is lunch cut short frequently? This cuts into time a child treasures- it may be the only time he gets to talk to his friends.

- A: That time is usually used for cleaning up the lunch room, kids are usually done eating after 20 minutes. This gap will shorten as the year goes on as they are getting used to the new routine.
 - Q: Is there differentiation- especially in math? Is there only 1 teacher in the classroom? Are they asked to do the harder problems or do they have to?
 - After looking at all of the data from the assessments we have given this year, we have been able to identify some areas that our students need support in. Specifically, the two biggest domains in need of more practice are numbers and operations and algebraic operation. In order to customize the learning to better fit our students' needs, we will be working in two different groups at times (Team Narwhal and Team Platypus). Mr. Manning will be working in the math classroom more frequently to help provide additional support and deliver customized mini-lessons to one of the teams. We want every student to experience growth in their mathematical abilities this year, and being able to deliver targeted instruction is one of the pieces to that puzzle. The teams may be changing frequently as we continue to assess student needs daily and modify what we do as teachers to provide them with appropriate opportunities to learn and grow. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or would like more information!

As we were working with subtracting multi-digit numbers this week we saw decomposing numbers and regrouping were areas that needed more practice.

One way you can support your student is by providing them with additional subtraction problems to practice regrouping (i.e. $564-467=?$). Maybe even get your student involved in a real life subtraction problem you are working on (bills, groceries, etc.), so that they can continue to see that these are problems we utilize everyday in the "adult" world. My mom used to always tell me a budget for grocery shopping and I would follow her around the store and subtract the amount of each item from our budget. It's a great way to build fluency...if you're up for the challenge...and the company! Or on the flip side, they can continue to build addition fluency by adding up each item you get at the grocery store. They can check their addition by seeing how close their answer is to the total at the register! Since we haven't worked with decimals, the students can just round the price to the nearest whole number. If you try this, I'd love to hear how it goes!

- **5th grade**

- Q: What is Mr. Gleason's role? Why is he traveling between classrooms?
 - A: Gleason is the special education teacher on the 5th grade team, and his schedule reflects the spaces that require more of a need for curricular modifications and specially designed instruction. He also spends a lot of time with his team planning, collaborating and making sure that all students' IEPs are followed.

- Q: There has been a lot more homework this year- parents are struggling with getting homework done. New reading log that has to be signed, weekly packet. Last year they only had 1 packet and now they have 3- now they have EL too. Kids getting anxious or struggling with it. Guideline for minutes won't be the same across grades - how do you manage that?
 - A: We encourage parents to reach out to teachers if they have concerns about their student and homework. There is variation from team to team in the amount of homework given, however, the general guidelines in grades 4-8 are 10 minutes per grade level, and in 4th and 5th grades, nightly reading may also be assigned.

Homework in 5th grade often follows a predictable routine - work is assigned on Monday and is due on Friday - and resources are provided in Friday newsletters. Teachers work with students at the start of the week to plan out how to accomplish the assignments on time, and students are asked to write the plan down in their agendas. Literacy offers a menu of homework options. Doing a little each night whenever possible can be a useful approach.
- Q: We loved 4th grade coffees- why aren't they happening anymore?
 - A: The team is currently thinking through coffees or considering additional options to engage with parents.
- Q: Are we still doing differentiation? How is differentiation addressed? Are kids getting it being pushed? Are you letting them complete basework before you push them? Can some of that be replaced? Eureka?
 - A: PRIME time is when all students can get what they need, enrichment or support, projects are usually rigorous and engaging.
 - In literacy PT, the students in Tier 1/enrichment are working on a RAFT writing unit to explore how Role, Audience, Format and Topic impact writing. Students are experiencing how stories change when those elements change.
 - In math PT, teachers teaching Enrichment groups are pulling from two books called Challenging Common Core and Advanced Common Core Exploration. Each lesson is linked to the standards that are being taught in class and includes an activity, a practice and an assessment. Students are also practicing for CalcuSolve.
 - In addition, community events and competitions are shared with parents in grade level newsletters and with students during the school day. Current opportunities for middle school students include CalcuSolve, the Fairchild Challenge, and Battle of the Books. Contact Ms. Lendyak-Peters for more information.
- Q: Is 5th going to be doing more projects? Since projects are done in school instead of at home.
 - A: Students are in the process of writing memoirs in literacy, and over the

next several weeks, they will begin a civics and government project in EL. The current unit question is “How can we as young citizens influence our elected officials and other adults to make positive environmental change?”

- **6th/7th grade**
 - Nothing to report!
- **8th grade**
 - Follow up on transition into not having 9th grade
 - **Pittsburgh High Schools: An Information Session-** *ECS counselors will share a brief overview of the landscape of high school choice in the Pittsburgh area. We will invite a few public and private high school representatives to join us on site to answer questions during a Q&A. More information regarding the date and time for this evening parent session will be shared as details are confirmed.*
 - *October 24, 6-7:30 in the Upper School Cafe*
 - **Guidance Support for All 8th Grade Students-** *Our current 8th grade students received a guidance lesson with our counselors last year in 7th grade about the landscape of Pittsburgh high schools, and they were encouraged to research their top three choices. Counselors will share an overview of the admission processes for local high schools in the Pittsburgh area during a grade level meeting. Counselors will follow up with students to provide group/individual support.*
 - **Ongoing Support for Families-** *We would like every 8th grade family to complete the [high school transition survey](#) to indicate your child’s high school transition needs. An Upper School counselor or teacher will follow up with your family to discuss transition support, if needed. Counselors will be communicating local opportunities to learn more about Pittsburgh area high schools (ex: Pittsburgh School Choice Fair) in the 8th grade weekly newsletter. Please note, we are unable to catch every deadline and updated date. Please be sure to keep track of applicable dates for your child’s high school transition.*
 - **8th Grade Graduation-** *Information will come out soon regarding location and date of this year’s graduation.*

CAMPUS WIDE

- Why aren’t there teacher pictures and information on the ECS website? Why is there not more information on curriculum in every grade.
 - A: We’ve taken off teacher info and contact info, because we scaling our system in a way that makes sense. Having over 125+ staff is a lot of

information to be updated and time to be spent. We will soon have a school district around the size of Avonworth. We are taking into consideration what other schools are doing, and not having this information seemed appropriate for our scale. We hope that this information will now be sent out in grade level newsletters, or you will receive a postcard with a photograph before the school year starts. We hope that you will follow us on social media to see interactions that are happening in the schools on a day to day basis. We recognize that parents/caregivers are fed a lot of information so we have to be selective in giving you the most important info, in the most concise way possible. As we expand we are hoping that rather than one email for all 3 schools, you will see building based communications that way you will receive necessary information that you need to know.

- Campus wide communications- why we communicate the way we do?
 - ECS is committed to maintaining and sustaining student and family privacy. Additionally, many situations that occur require us to review incidents and activities through our legal team. We will continue to do our best in communicating what we can in the best form possible to the most critical people impacted. Know that we are always thinking about what is best for students in every decision we tackle. Sometimes, however, our guidance from legal may feel like we are not as open as we would like to be. Please be patient with us as we work through each unique situation, and we will do our best to get the right information to you as quickly as we can.
- Just a reminder that there is an expectation to read Monday Blast and Grade Level Friday Newsletters. This is where important information is distributed. If you aren't subscribed to the Monday Blast you can [sign up here](#). If you aren't receiving Friday newsletters, contact your grade level teachers at gradeteachers@ecspgh.org (ex. firstgradeteachers@ecspgh.org, kindergartenteachers@ecspgh.org). Also, remember that teachers are more than willing to tackle a challenge you are facing or a question you need answered about your child, the education program, or simply how to navigate the tricky business of homework. Reach out directly to us - we are here to help!